Castlemaine Naturalist

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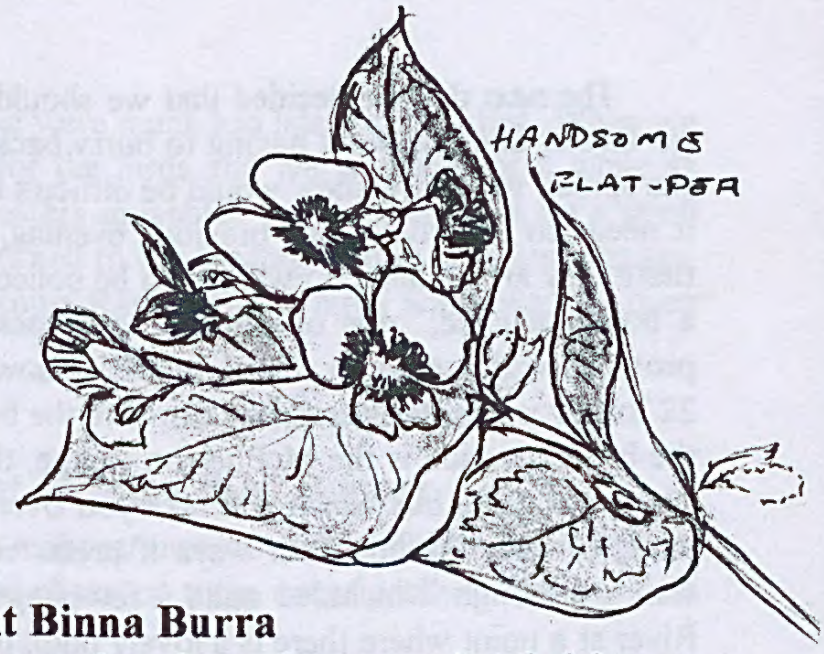

Birding at Binna Burra

Recently Phee and I had the opportunity of spending a couple of nights at Binna Burra Mountain Lodge in the Lamington National Park south of Brisbane. It is not far from O'Reillys' as the crow (or Bowerbird) flies, being about 4 km to the east on another spur, but it is about 22 km by foot, and more than 40 km by road. To reach it we drove South from Brisbane towards the Gold Coast, then turned off at Nerang, and drove up the mountain road through Beechmont. The lodge consists of a large comfortable lounge room with gift/craft shop attached, an upstairs library/recreation room, and a large dining room with a splendid view across the ranges. Accommodation is in motel type units, semi-detached, ours being completely self contained. Others have shared facilities. The tariff includes all meals, and that includes an early morning cup of tea, breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, nibbles before dinner, dinner and supper before bed. We arrived in time for Sunday lunch, which was a most sumptuous affair, hot and cold dishes, desserts including hot puddings, fruits, etc. It is no wonder that much walking needs to be done. Dinner and breakfast were also too tempting with a large array of dishes from which to choose.

The establishment is owned by shareholders and run by a manager and his wife, while the staff includes people who act as rangers, leading walks, running various activities, etc. The activity on the afternoon we arrived was the Flying Fox, so down we went to see what it was all about. (Any direction from the lodge is down.) The Flying Fox consisted of a wire approximately a couple of hundred metres in length strung between two trees on either side of a creek. One put on a helmet and harness, the same as used for abseiling, which was connected to the running gear. When one came to an eventual halt suspended above the lowest point of the terrain, it was necessary to disconnect the safety cord, throw down a rope to someone beneath, then lower oneself by means of the rope as in abseiling. The outfit could then be towed back up to the starting platform for the next rider. Well, it was a great sensation whizzing across the clearing and then into the trees on the far side, but only lasted for a few seconds. Following this excitement we continued on a couple of the tracks, adding to our bird list.

The next day we decided that we should ask for a packed lunch so we could go further afield without having to hurry back, and also to avoid the temptation of the spread which we knew would be difficult to resist. If a packed lunch is required it needs to be ordered the previous evening, then the next morning at breakfast, there they are all lined up waiting to be collected. With the lunch there is provided a bottle of juice, one of water, and a backpack to carry it if required. One is provided with a map on arrival, and this shows 9 short walks, i.e. up to 6 km, and 22 longer walks. If desired you can take the border walk, which takes you south to the border, which is the McPherson Range, thence west to finish up at O'Reillys'. They also run a bus which will take you over to O'Reillys' and allow you to walk back, or take the bus both ways if preferred. We opted for one of the shorter walks, although it included quite a few steps. It took us down to the Coomera River at a point where there is a lovely pool, inhabited by a large eel, where we had the lunch which we had brought, sharing it with the eel and a Pied Currawong which is obviously accustomed to being fed by visitors

All the walks take you through rain forest, with all sorts of vines and creepers and plants which look as though they have escaped from a florists. There were lots of bird calls, but frustratingly the birds themselves kept mostly out of sight amongst the canopy, or if sighted, provided only a tantalising glimpse of underside. There were plenty of Brush Turkeys, and we did see some Russet-tailed Thrushes and Logrunners scratching in the litter. Whipbirds kept calling, and at one stage a family performed just beside the track, seemingly for my benefit. Other birds which were unusual for us included the Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Satin Bowerbird, Green Catbird and Brown Cuckoo-dove. As were returning up the track, I suddenly realised at one point as I was stepping from a patch of bright sunlight into deep shade, that I was about to put my foot on (or nearly on) a slow-moving python of about 2 m, which regarded itself as the owner of the track and showed little inclination to move aside. Occasionally too, Red-necked Pademelons would hop across the track.

One evening we were taken out spotlighting after dinner. About a dozen people availed themselves of the opportunity. As we assembled a Boobook Owl could be heard calling from the nearby trees, but it initially proved rather elusive. However the beam of light did reveal large numbers of Red-necked Pademelons, some with young in pouch, grazing the lawns. The ranger pointed out that their numbers were kept in check by the dingoes which live locally. As that night was moonless, they were out in large numbers, whereas on moonlit nights they were more vulnerable and more circumspect in venturing out. Eventually a Boobook Owl was discovered and in a nearby tree were two Ringtail Possums.

We were keen to sight Regent Bower Birds which do frequent the area but are not common. One glimpse was all we had while at the Flying Fox, however on the way back to Brisbane we called at a restaurant at Mt. Tamborine for lunch, where the proprietor told us that he regularly has 7 of them coming in each morning into

his garden for breakfast. Of course we were much too late for breakfast. While we were talking he put out some food for the birds and we watched for a while as Rainbow Lorikeets and Lewin Honeyeaters squabbled over it, then went for a stroll through his attractive garden. We returned to the feeding station in a few minutes, only to be told that we had missed some Regent Bowerbirds while we had been away. Oh well, them's the breaks.

George Broadway

61 Hunter Street, Winter Bird Report

This year has seen the welcome reappearance of a male Flame Robin after a long absence from our garden. I have observed them occasionally in the bush on the nearby Kalimna ridge however.

I am also delighted to report that the White-naped Honeyeaters have visited the bird bath for the first time, in groups of from two to eight birds. The New Holland Honeyeaters seem to have become permanent residents, and even regard the flowering camellias as part of their diet.

An unusual sight on our patch has been the group of Welcome Swallows circling around in pursuit of insects just before the storm this week (mid-August).

Meanwhile, the cottoneaster berries are almost finished, those on the ground have been left until last and are now being demolished by the daring (or reckless?) immature Crimson Rosellas - probably the "teenagers" from last summer's hatching in the nest box. So far they have eluded the neighbourhood cats.

The Australian Raven, apparently well pleased with the results of dunking tough bread crusts in the bird bath is trying the same tactic with large nuts from fruit (plums?) or berries, and even small vertebrae similar to rabbit bones on one occasion!

A pair of Maned Geese (Wood Ducks), honking in frustration, have been inspecting the huge old Sugar Gum across the road in Buda garden, particularly the areas where limbs have been removed, but no hollows have formed.

The Goldfinches, Silvereyes, and Yellow-rumped Thornbills all compete with the Sparrows for space in the birdbath, and the Blackbird pair scatter garden mulch all over the tiled verandah. However, on hearing their gentle, sweet song at first light from the camellias outside the bedroom window, all is forgiven.

Shirley Parnaby.

Mount Alexander Eucalypt Field Trip

Eucalypt - eu (well) kalyptos (covered, as in the cap covering the buds), according to the Macquarie dictionary.

After a magnificent slide presentation of the Eucalypts of Australia the previous night, ten expectant Field Nats set off to see the 'real thing' in the Mount Alexander district on Saturday afternoon, September 9.

Led by Ern Perkins, botanist, bushman, photographer, educator, tour leader and vice-president extraordinaire, the group was kitted out with two A4 sheets. On one was a meticulously planned itinerary, with a dozen stops - through Chewton and Expedition Pass, Mount Alexander Regional Park and Lang's Lookout, north past Harcourt Reservoir, along Fogarty's Gap Road towards Maldon, and back to Castlemaine via Woodbrook and White Gum Roads.

The other two-sided sheet was the *piece de resistance*. Ern had distilled his botanical scholarship and knowledge of Eucalypts, identifying four groupings - gum trees, stringybarks, boxes, peppermints and ironbarks. Row by row, juvenile leaves were described and drawn, followed by the appearance of the tree (bark, leaves, shape), followed by description and drawing of fruit and buds and, lastly, notes on occurrence. Equipped with our ready reference we learnt, with mounting confidence, to play detective.

The key to it all, according to Ern and fellow tour leader Lesley, was to find and examine the juvenile leaves on or in the vicinity of the tree to be identified. Were the leaves stalked or stalkless, unpaired or in opposite pairs? Were the rounded leaves those of the Long-leaf Box or the Mealy Bundy? And how can you tell? Check fruit and bud! And so we came to recognise the subtle and not so subtle distinctions between a dozen Eucalypts.

The ground was wet and the creeks running. Frogs were revelling in it near Golden Point. The adjacent 'forest' of milk cartons attested to the revegetation achievements of the Golden Point Landcare group. Ern regaled us with the story of the academic who discovered that River Redgum saplings could be successfully transplanted after being given 'a short back and sides' - stripped of branches and leaves and all but the tap root!

The tour over, we were urged by Ern and Lesley to keep looking and learning to recognise and name the Eucalypts in our locality. Before long, like the assorted shapes and sizes of friends and relatives, we'll identify a Eucalypt a mile off - almost!

Angela Munroe

Spring Walks

6/9/00 Wattle Flat Bush, Youngman's Track. - Already quite a few plants in flower, and we found 9 species of orchid, including one patch of about 130

Nodding greenhoods, and several patches of approx. 50 - 70 P. nana. I recorded 3 different wattles in my notebook. Species recorded for the afternoon were - White Marianth (*Rhytidosperum procumbens*, Leopard Orchid (*Diurus pardina*), Blunt Greenhood (*Pterostylus curta*), Tall Greenhood (*P. longifolia*), Nodding Greenhood (*P. nutans*), Dwarf Greenhood (*P. nana*), Emerald Tipped Greenhood, (*P. smaragdyna*) Gnat Orchid (*Curtostylus reniformis*), Pink Fingers (*Caledenia fuscata*), Blue Caledenia (*C. cerulea*),Early Nancy (*Wurmbea diocea*), Pink Bells (*Tretratheca cilliata*), Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Rough Wattle (A. *aspera*), Hovea (*H. linearis*), Gorse bitter-pea (*Davisia ulicifolia*), Slender Riceflower *(Pimelia linifolia*), Yam Daisy (*Allicroseris sp. aff. lanceolata*), Cats Claw Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*), Scented Sundew (*Drosera whittakerii*), Climbing Sundew (*D. macranthra*), Hakea (*Hakea decurrens ssp. decapata*), Fairy Waxflower (*Philotheca verrucosis*), Honey Pots (*Melicrus urceolatus*) RM

13/9/00 Kalimna Circuit Track Gorse Bitter-pea, Rough Mint Bush (*Prostanthera denticulata*) - just coming into flower, Fairy Waxflower, White Marianth, Rough Wattle, Golden Wattle, Gold Dust Wattle, Pink Bells, Yam Daisy, Cat's Claw Grevillea, Honey Pots, Golden Moths *(Diurus lanceolata*) Pink Fingers, Craspedia variabilis (Billy Buttons), False Sarsparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Climbing Sundew. M.P.

20/9/00 Natalie de Maccus' Place, Barkers Creek (just!). Natalie first showed us her garden, where she is mainly using plants indigenous to the area, and has quite a show of wattles, Rough, Gold Dust and Hedge (*A. paradoxa*), in the planting in front of their small home, as well as some native grasses, Hardenbergia, and Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata).* On our walk around the property she showed us little piles of loose sticks she had put over precious orchids to discourage the local rabbits, kangaroos and wallabies, to say nothing of the choughs. Among her treasures we were shown Leopard Orchids, Blunt Greenhoods, Dwarf Greenhoods, Pink Fingers and Golden Moths. There were masses of Early Nancies, and also *Hypoxis* sp. (Yellow Stars) on the swampy area, Pink Bells, and Slender Riceflower. Natalie also showed us the spot that she and John are trying to clear of weeds and replant. R.M.

27/9/00 Fryers Road near Spring Gully Road Cr., Chewton. This spot added a few new species to our list on the spring walks. Again there weren't many birds to distract us from our hunt for flowers, but we did see a White-eared Honeyeater, and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, and heard Grey Currawong and Spotted Pardalotes. We added Pink Beard-heath (*Leucopogon ericoides*), Handsome Flat-pea (*Platylobium formosum*), Waxlip Orchids (*Glossodia major)* and Native Pansy or Primula *(Goodenia blackiana*) to the list - as well as a billardaria, which was not in flower, but was worth noting as it is an unusual plant for this district. Also seen were Gold-dust wattle, Fairy Waxflower, Pinkbells, White Marianth, Pink fingers, Tall Sundew (Erinallum), Cats Claw Grevillea, Hedge Wattle, Yam Daisy, Gorse Bitter-pea and Tall Greenhood. The area was a real picture, and a number of us remarked that we would like our garden to look just like that! R.M.

Observations

• Ken McKimmie reports that he has had an Olive-backed Oriole at his place in Chewton for the first time at the end of August. He also reported seeing a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at his brother's place near the Kyneton Golf Course.

• From Shirley Parnaby comes the report of a juvenile Darter visiting the Botanic Gardens to share the fishing with a pair of Little Pied Cormorants. It is usually perched on a low branch overhanging the water at the southern end of the island, sometimes head and neck tucked under its wing, but on one occasion it was seen with wings extended to dry in the chilly wind.

• Shirley also reports that the Southern Boobook resident in the Gardens is still perched in solitary state in the roosting tree, and so far no partner has appeared this season. On one visit she saw him being harassed by a group of indignant thornbills.

• Margaret Badminton was sitting having lunch out at the base of Mount Tarrengower on 20/9, while a pair of Yellow-rumped Thornbills continued to build their nest, carrying small, fine twigs, and a Grey Fantail continued to construct its nest nearby, working on the "wineglass stem" first.

• Also, when she called at the Flora Reserve near the old Walmer School she found herself being told in no uncertain terms that she was intruding - by a flock of about 50 White-browed Woodswallows!

• On the afternoon of Thursday 21/9 a swarm of bees flew directly over where Barry and Annette Chester were standing just outside their shed, and straight into the first Galah nest at 118 Blakeley Road which has been used to raise a number of young over the past 8 or 10 years. The nest is some 10m up in a Yellow Gum. I'm hoping there were no young Galahs or Sugar Gliders in the nest! Rita Mills

• John Turnbull has apparently got some Kangaroos with some road sense. He has watched them pause at the side of the road, one at a time, look right, then left, before crossing over to the neighbours' property opposite! (I've seen similar behaviour at One Tree Hill near Bendigo years ago. Ed.)

• Maureen Dredge's dogs were making a great fuss on 28/9. She went out to investigate and found that they were barking at an Echidna which was wandering just through the fence.

• Leslie Perkins passed on the information from a Kyneton resident that a Red-capped Robin has been seen at Kyneton recently.

• At Macedon Ken Cross has had a White-browed Scrubwren tapping on the window each morning.

• John Turnbull tells us that it is not only the humans who are affected by the Olympics. One morning during the Games he watched a Wallaby hop up to his dam, 'dive' in, swim the length and pull itself out on the other side and hop off into the bush! He realised later that it has quite a path on the other side of the dam and wonders if it regularly swims the dam.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

Cape Broom - Five people turned up for the last broom pull and again got quite a bit done, but there is still much to do, especially constantly keeping at the re-growth. When the rain started the opportunity was taken to plant 60 Bursaria seedlings.

Another working bee is planned for **Friday 20th Oct. at 9 am.** We will be working on the east facing slope. Enter via the gate opposite Burnett Road. Bring a snack and something to drink, gloves, sturdy footwear, hat, sunscreen.

V.F.N.C.A. March 2001 Campout Hosted by the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club, Inc., it is to be held in Central Gippsland, **Fri. 9th - Mon. 12 March**.

Venue: Rawson Village, Pinnacle Drive, Rawson. (registration available from 4pm Fri. Rooms to be vacated by 10 am Mon.

Costs: 3 nights accom. and meals $150 per head.

Own accom. $ 80 per head (with lunch and dinners Sat - Mon. . supplied)

Accommodation is available for 180 people in either the hostel (3 double bunks plus ensuite per room) or lodge (2 or 3 people per room with shared bathroom and tea making facilities) at Rawson Village. Pillows and blankets provided but linen or sleeping bag and towels required.

Meals to be provided are breakfast, cut lunch and dinner from Sat b'fast to Mon. lunch, which will be a barbecue. Supper available each night, with self serve tea and coffee.

Rawson Caravan Park is already fully booked but those wishing to camp can do so at Karingal Scout Camp, 16 km from Rawson. sites are $4 per person per day. 15 sites have been tentatively reserved for the 3 nights. If you would like to camp please contact Phil. Rayment on 5122 1050 ASAP.

The excursions, some full day and some half day, sound very interesting and varied. Examples of what is being offered are - Baw Baw Plateau, alpine plants and geology with Leon Costermans (MT Erica and Mushroom Rocks) or Sub Alpine flora with Peter and Kathie Strickland (Mt. St Gwinear), rehabilitation of a river system, Rintouls Creek (palaeontology and fossils), Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve, Forest Management - looking at logging coupes and water catchments, life cycle of a river and a number more - 15 choices in all.

But - Application forms are supposed to be in with the $30 deposit by **Oct. 15**, to Wendy Savage, Secretary, LVFNC Inc. , P.O. Box 1205, Morwell, 3840

For more info. phone Wendy on 5634 2246 (AH) or Phillip on 5122 1050 (AH).

All the information, map and booking forms can be collected from Tonks Bros. if required.

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST, OCTOBER 2000

PROGRAMME

EXCURSIONS **General Meetings** Are held in the Uniting church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street. **Excursions** leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.

Business Meetings are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

Sun. Oct. 8. **Castlemaine Box/Ironbark Forest in Spring.** An Excursion with Ballarat F.N.C. Leader is E. Perkins.

Wed Oct. 11 **Another Spring walk.** Walmer, leader, M. Panter. Leave 27 Doveton St. at 4 pm. usually last about an hour.

Thurs. 12 - Sun. 15 . VFNCA Campout at Howlong.

Fri. Oct. 13 **Canada** with George Broadway. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat. Oct. 14 **Morgans Track Wildflowers (Chewton).** Leader is R. Mills. Leave 13 Mostyn St. 1.30pm sharp.

Fri. Oct 20. **Broom Pull Working Bee.** See details p. 7 .

Fri. Nov 10. Speaker is Rebecca Ramage, Mount Alexander shire **Weeds and Streamsides** Officer. UCA hall, 8pm

Sat. Nov. 11 **Terrick Terrick** All day excursion or *overnight camping.* Leave 27 Doveton St. at 9 **am.** bring lunch, snacks, etc., plus camping gear etc. Of course, if you are going to camp overnight, be aware that there are no facilities other than toilets, and you will need to take water. Mitiamo is 6 kms to the south.

Sun. 19 Nov. **Mooloort Plains.** A joint excursion with Maryborough FNC Leave 13 Mostyn St at 12.30 or meet at the Brian Dowey Reserve, cr. Barringhup Road, and Midland Highway, Carisbrook.

Fri. Dec. 8. **Members and Visitors Night** - including Gluepot Reminiscences. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat Dec. 9 **Picnic tea at the Cascades, Metcalfe.** Details to be decided later.

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Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the club.

2000 Committee M. Dredge (President) ph 5470 6474E. Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), G. Broadway (Sec.). ph. 5472 2513, J. Turnbull (treas.) ph. 5474 3005, R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, Z . Thomas. B. Maund .

Subscriptions for 2000 -

Ordinary Membership: Single ,$22 Family, $30

Pensioner or student: Single $19 Family $24

Supporting: $31

The subscription also covers postage of the 'Castlemaine Naturalist'.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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